

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Walnut Street Historic District

other names/site number 079-472-23000

2. Location

street & number Roughly including both sides of Walnut Street between State and Gum Streets N/A not for publication
city or town North Vernon N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Jennings code 079 zip code 47265

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====

4. National Park Service Certification

=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register _____

____ See continuation sheet.

____ determined eligible for the _____
National Register

____ See continuation sheet.

____ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register

____ removed from the National Register _____

____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
 of Action

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private

☐ public-local

☐ public-State

☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

☐ building(s)

☒ district

☐ site

☐ structure

☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

 17 6 buildings

 sites

 structures

_____ objects
__17__ __6__ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National
Register __0__

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

____N/A_____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: __Domestic_____	Sub: __Single Dwelling_____
__Domestic_____	__Secondary Structure_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: __Domestic_____	Sub: __Single Dwelling_____
__Domestic_____	__Secondary Structure_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

__Late Victorian: Victorian_____
__Bungalow/Craftsman_____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation __Concrete_____
roof __asphalt_____
walls __Wood_____
____Aluminum_____
other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

☐ Architecture _____
☐ Commerce _____
☐ Industry _____

Period of Significance ☐ 1880-1947 _____

Significant Dates _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder __North Vernon Pump and Lumber Company_____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

___ previously listed in the National Register

___ previously determined eligible by the National Register

___ designated a National Historic Landmark

___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

X State Historic Preservation Office

___ Other State agency

___ Federal agency

___ Local government

___ University

___ Other

Name of repository: _____

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property __7 acres_____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing				
1	16	618900	4	317900	3	16	618900	4	317800
2	16	618940	4	317860	4	16	618840	4	317840

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====

11. Form Prepared By

name/title__Carol Ann Schweikert__

organization_for Jennings County Preservation Association date__3/27/06__

street & number__307 N. 10th Street__ telephone__317-776-1239__

city or town__Noblesville__ state_IN_ zip code __46060__

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name __See attached__

street & number__ telephone__

city or town__ state__ zip code __

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

 Walnut Street Historic District

Name of property

 Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

Materials

Foundation: Brick
Limestone

Walls: Vinyl

Roof: Slate

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

Architectural Description

The Walnut Street Historic District is located in North Vernon, Indiana along US50/Walnut Street just past the intersection of IN 3 and IN 7. It consists of primarily of 2-story homes most built just after the turn of the century for some of North Vernon's most prominent businessmen in the early 20th century. The only one-story homes are modern construction. The district has mature trees with most house lots raised off the street level with steps leading from the sidewalk to the porches. The height off the street varies, but decreases east to west from State Street to Gum Street. This is a busy, heavily traveled highway.

15 Walnut Street (Photo #5)

c. 1907; Platter House

This American Foursquare has a hipped roof, wide eaves and pairs of brackets around the roofline. Each of the four attic dormers has a pair of windows. The foundation is concrete block. The exterior has been covered with aluminum siding. The front porch extends across the entire width of the house and includes a center gable over the steps. The entry is located underneath the porch in slightly off-center in the façade. A modern storm door covers the existing front door. A large picture window with single pane transom flanks the door on the west side. East of the door is a large group of three windows, two double hung windows with a large single-pane stationary window in between. These windows are topped by a single pane transom. Windows on the remaining facades are double-hung windows mainly singles, but the west façade has a group of three windows near the northwest corner with two windows above it on the 2nd floor. The porch gable has a decorative swag and dentil trim. The porch roof is supported by smooth round columns. The front façade is accented on the 2nd floor by a square bay with three windows. The west façade has a square bay and exterior door with small roof overhang. The original steps and landing are gone. *Contributing.*

19 Walnut Street (Photo #6)

c. 1901; Charles Platter House

This 2-story side gable plan has an older brick foundation in the back while the front of the house is stone. The side gable roof has iron motifs at the gable ends and a finial on top of the turret. The wood siding on the 1st floor is narrower than the 2nd floor aluminum siding. The windows vary in size and configuration and include both arched windows and leaded glass sashes. The porch roof extends down from the eaves of the 2nd story roof flaring out at the edge of the porch. The 2nd story front façade has an engaged turret on one side and a pointed arch under the front gable on the other. Recessed behind the pointed arch is a small round arch window centered above a 3-sided bay. A second arch is found on the west façade. The porch piers and porch walls are wood sided. The piers are topped with square columns. The brick chimney is located on the west side of the house. The rear of the house has a first floor porch beneath a 2nd story sleeping porch. The outbuilding is a combination of several buildings constructed and joined together over a period of time. The building includes both hipped and gable roofs with different widths and profiles of wood siding. *Contributing with Contributing Outbuilding.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

23 Walnut Street c. 1901; Frank Platter House
This wood clapboard, Free Classic style house has a slate gable on hip roof with one-over-one windows. The front gable has decorative siding in a sunburst design (Photo #9). The upper 1/3 of the front picture window on the first floor is stained glass. A small porch sits within the L-shaped floor plan. The stone foundation extends up to form porch piers. These piers are topped with round columns. The existing railing was a recent replacement. The porch gable has a decorative swag. The wood-frame outbuilding has a hipped roof with slate shingles. A single, modern garage door is located on the south side. Small, stationary windows with simple trim provide light inside. Two small window openings are found on the east façade. (Photo #15) *Contributing with Contributing Outbuilding.*

29 Walnut Street (Photo #1) c. 1907; J.H. Powell House
This 2-story vinyl-sided, late Victorian house has a hipped roof with front gable, one over one windows and small front dormer. The porch steps and entry are off-center. The one-story front porch extends across the entire front of the house and is supported by five smooth round columns. The porch gable includes a decorative swag (Photo #10). The large window grouping under the porch has multiple pane configurations in several stationary panes with two small sash windows. Two small windows with diamond panes are centered in the front gable. This gable is highly ornamented with diamond siding at the top and a sunburst pattern flanking the windows (Photo #10). The small front dormer has a round arch window surrounded by diamond-shaped siding. The side gable has fish-scale siding. A second decorative window grouping is found on the first floor of the west side with an arched stained glass window and narrow double sash windows (Photo 11). This window group is surrounded by fish scale siding. The outbuilding is 1½ stories tall with a gambrel roof running north/south. The roof is a standing seam metal roof. The building is primarily concrete block construction. Due to the gambrel roof, the ends of the building have vertical wood siding on the 2nd floor. (Photo #14). Double doors are located on the 2nd floor in the ends of the building. The south end of the outbuilding has two wood garage doors with windows in the upper half. *Contributing with Contributing Outbuilding.*

35 Walnut Street (Photo #1) c. 1897, Gumble House
This late Victorian home has wood siding and a concrete block foundation. The L-shaped front porch has round columns. The front ell has chamfered corners on both the first and second floors with a gable on the upper floor. The first floor of the ell has large window openings on the front with smaller openings on the corners. The northeast corner of the house is chamfered with window openings on both floors. The windows have varying configurations of 9 or 18 panes over one and original storm windows. All windows have decorative sawtooth headers with bullseye medallions at the corners and fluted side trim (Photo #12). The wood-frame outbuilding has a hipped roof. The building is sheathed in a thin, metal covering stamped with a brick pattern. The modern garage door is off-center on the south façade. The original window opening is infilled. *Contributing with Contributing Outbuilding.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 4

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

39 Walnut Street (Photo #2)

c. 1901, Powell/Conner House

This late Victorian home has rusticated concrete block foundation and a 3-sided bay on the first floor. Gables extend out from the hipped roof on three of the four sides. The wood siding has been covered with vinyl. The porch columns and walls were constructed using two shades of tan bricks laid in a decorative pattern. Window openings have a variety of architectural details including small roofs, arches and stained glass sashes. The plan includes a small one-story ell extending east near the rear of the house. The windows are one over one. The one-story outbuilding is constructed of rusticated concrete block with narrow wood siding in the gable ends. The southeast façade has two sets of original bi-fold garage doors with four-pane window openings in the upper third. The east and west facades have single double hung windows with six over six panes. A narrow brick chimney runs through the south gable, flush with the façade. Two window openings on the first floor had six over six sashes originally, but some have been replaced. Near the gable peak is a 6-pane, stationary window. An early pebbled concrete fence post remains next to the outbuilding. *Contributing with contributing outbuilding.*

43 Walnut Street (Photo #2 & 3)

c. 1912

This 2-story wood-frame home has a concrete block foundation and one over one windows with simple trim. The L-shaped porch has brick columns and a simple wood railing. A large picture window is centered in the façade under the porch. The off-center steps lead to one of two entrances from the porch. The irregular roof has front and side gables with cornice returns. Each gable has a window opening. The chimney mass is centered in the roof. The 2-car outbuilding is wood-frame with a hipped roof. Two modern garage doors are located on the south side. A human-size entry is on the east side near the northeast corner. *Contributing with Contributing Outbuilding.*

51 Walnut Street (Photo #3)

c. 1890

This simple gabled-ell house has one over one windows, one-story rear addition and aluminum siding. The rusticated concrete block porch piers are topped with square wood columns. The profile of the porch balustrade is bowed beyond the flat plane of the handrail. (Photo #13). The porch roof forms a gable over the wide steps. The west façade has a first floor 3-sided bay. The home has two chimneys, one in the center of the home and one on the east end of the ell. A modern one-story brick addition is located on the rear. *Contributing.*

105 Walnut Street (Photo #7)

c. 1911; Pennington House

This 2-story house is late Queen Anne in form with a Craftsman style porch, that may be a replacement. The house has wood siding, concrete foundation and hipped roof with front and side gables. The one-story porch sits inside the rough-ell plan of the house. The porch piers are rusticated concrete block topped with square wood columns and connected by a simple square railing. The entry is off-center in the front façade. The one over one windows have simple window trim. The one-story outbuilding is modern construction with vinyl siding. *Contributing with Non-Contributing Outbuilding.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 5

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

32 Walnut Street (Photo #8)

c. 1904; Frank Robinson House

This 2½-story Free Classic home was built c. 1904 with numerous decorative elements. The home has a rusticated concrete block foundation with a full basement. The basement walls are broken at regular intervals by 3-paned horizontal windows. The irregular slate roof has ridge cresting. The window openings vary in size and include stained glass, leaded glass, round and segmented arches and one over one sashes. The vinyl siding does not obscure the decorative detailing. The middle section of the front ell “pops” out from the plane of the façade and includes elaborate detailing from the first floor up to the gable. Large stained glass windows, arches and fan details highlight this area. The first floor of the corner of this section is chamfered with fan-like brackets accenting the first floor window. The small porch extends out from the front façade of the house. The porch roof is supported by two sets of three smooth round columns resting on concrete block bases. The porch roof gable has an elaborate swag detail. On the east side of the house the plan is elongated with a one story ell. This one-story section may have been a very early addition as the material and trim are very similar, but overall the decorative details are less elaborate. More recent alterations to this ell include a modern brick chimney and a doorway converted to a window. The original steps for this door remain intact. *Contributing.*

38 Walnut Street (Photo #4)

c. 1985; One-story brick and vinyl sided home. *Non-Contributing.*

44 Walnut Street

c. 1940/1960; Motel. Three individual buildings. Labeled a “tourist camp” on the 1943 Sanborn map, these are 3 of the 4 original buildings. Later alterations make this motel non-contributing in its current condition. *Non-Contributing.*

52 Walnut Street

c. 1995; One-story vinyl sided home. *Non-Contributing.*

106 Walnut Street

c. 1870/1892; John Cope House

This Victorian era home is 2-stories tall with one-over-one windows. The home was originally constructed c. 1870, but tax values show an additional improvement c. 1892, equal to the existing value. Three of the four exterior facades are covered by aluminum siding. The one-story front porch runs along the east half of the front of the house. It has a poured concrete floor. The porch roof is supported by three round columns that are not original. The primary façade (south) has a 2-story bay with three windows on each floor. The roofline is broken by gables on all four sides. The home has entrances on three of the four sides. The east side entrance has a small portico with gable roof over the entrance. The rear façade has a one-story garage addition. *Contributing.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 6

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Walnut Street Historic District is eligible for listing under Criterion A for Community Planning and Development in North Vernon and Criterion C, Architecture. This area of Walnut Street was developed predominantly by the Platter family and J.H. Powell, owners of the North Vernon Lumber Company. Many of these homes were constructed while the company operated as both a building supply company and as building contractors and retain numerous architectural features characteristic of their respective styles. The neighborhood also reflects North Vernon's early history with homes from some of its early businessmen and politicians. While this district has undergone unsympathetic infill construction on the north side, the remaining structures reflect a period of construction that represents the contributions of the Platter family, J.H. Powell and others in North Vernon's early history.

North Vernon was originally platted in 1852 by Hagerman Tripp and Hiram Prather under the name Tripton. The first railroad in Indiana ran from Madison through what is now North Vernon's business section. The men anticipated growth of a town spurred by the railroads. In 1854, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad extended its line from Cincinnati to form an intersection with the first railroad. After this extension, other additions were made using the name North Vernon. This area of North Vernon was laid out by Dr. Ezra F. Pabody in five divisions between 1854 and 1865. This district includes lots in all five of Pabody's divisions. John C. Cope described the 1866 town as "crude" with several hundred houses. Most of the residences were one story, "cheap frame buildings". Despite this unflattering description, the town was incorporated in 1867 and in 1876, the residents voted to change from a town to an incorporated city. That same year, the town's name was officially changed to North Vernon. By the 1880s, it was truly a railroad town, third in Indiana in the number of trains handled. Railroads criss-crossed the town with a daily schedule of 93 trains.

The early residents of this district include J.C. Cope, Wolf Gumble, Mose Gumble, and Hugh J. Berkshire. These men were instrumental in North Vernon's growth and development in the early years through politics and businesses. One of the oldest houses in the district is the John C. Cope house at 106 Walnut Street. Cope was North Vernon's first mayor. He was born in 1841 and settled in North Vernon in 1866. He married Eva in 1874. During his lifetime, he was employed in a variety of positions, including cashier of the North Vernon State Bank and postmaster of North Vernon. He was active in local politics serving as mayor from 1876-1880 and elected auditor of Jennings County in 1886. Cope was active in civic organizations and served as Master of the North Vernon Masons. Cope gave each of his three grandchildren \$2,500 for educational purposes in his will. Cope resided in this home until his death in 1920 at age 78.

Another pre-1900 home in the district is the Gumble house at 35 Walnut Street. It was constructed by Hugh J. Berkshire c. 1897. Berkshire, a railroad agent, moved to Chicago and sold the house to father/son Wolf and Mose (Moses) Gumble in 1900. Wolf Gumble, a native of Germany, was an early merchant in North Vernon. He came to the United States in 1862 and settled in North Vernon in 1868. He opened a store here selling clothing, shoes, dry goods, trunks, hats, etc. Wolf was also associated with the North Vernon Building and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 7

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

Loan. He died in this home in 1919. His son joined him as a partner, Wolf Gumble & Son, around 1894. Mose (Moses) assumed control of the store several years before his father's death. Mose's son Stanley took over the store after his father's death in 1955. The store flourished in North Vernon for more than 90 years.

Before 1900, this neighborhood was sparsely populated. However, the early 1900s were a period of strong growth and development, primarily due to the owners of the North Vernon Lumber Company, a major employer in North Vernon for many years. Between 1900 and 1912, eight homes were built here, six of them by members of the North Vernon Lumber Company. The company, known as the North Vernon Pump and Lumber Company, was formed when the Platter family (Edgar Platter & Sons) and Joseph H. Powell, owner of a lumber mill, joined their two enterprises. The manufacturing facilities and offices were located only 3-4 blocks from this district, and in 1900, several lots remained undeveloped along this street, both good reasons for them to settle in this neighborhood.

Edgar Platter, patriarch of the Platter family, was born in 1836 in Ohio and married Emma Jane Squire around 1855. Edgar worked with his brother in the pump business before enlisting during the Civil War. In 1871, Edgar moved to Anderson and continued making pumps. When wood became more expensive and harder to obtain in Anderson, Edgar moved the company to North Vernon in 1892. The family purchased large tracts of wooded land in Jennings and the surrounding counties and re-sold it after clearing the wood. Edgar's two oldest sons, Frank and Charles, assumed control of the Platter operation in 1895.

J.H. Powell owned a planning mill and factory at the corner of Madison and Chestnut Streets. In November, 1895 the Platters joined with J.H. Powell under the name North Vernon Pump and Lumber Company. After the merger, the company moved away from pump manufacturing and into lumber and building contracting. The homes they constructed in this district were part of that change and may have been used to showcase and advertise their skill and expertise. In January, 1907, the company named was changed to North Vernon Lumber Company reflecting their focus on lumber and other building materials and building construction and abandonment of the pump business. In 1915, J.H. Powell and his family moved back to California. Powell died soon after and his widow sold her share of the company to the Platters.

In 1911, mail order companies appear to have adversely affected several local merchants including the North Vernon Lumber Company. Advertisements by several local companies during this time touted the benefits of buying locally. One advertisement by the North Vernon Lumber Company stated they could compete with anyone on building materials, "mail order houses not excepted." In May, 1911, a special sale was held by the North Vernon merchants encouraging customers to bring in their catalogues so merchants could show that they can sell the same products for less money. The merchants even offered to pay the train fare for out-of-town customers.

In the 1910 census, both Frank and Charles are shown as owners of a lumber company, however, by 1920, they are listed as manufacturers, indicating another shift, this time from lumber and construction to manufacturing.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 8

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

The company name changed again to North Vernon Lumber Mills. They expanded into bedroom furniture, porch and lawn furniture, cabinets and radio and sound equipment. They advertised their porch and lawn swings directly in the *North Vernon Sun* in 1911. In 1915, The Tripp Company, a local merchant, advertised "Home Made Lawn Swings" using the same photograph as the lumber company's 1911 ads. The lumber company's newspaper advertising had greatly declined by this time, so it seems the company in 1915 was transitioning from a building supply and contracting company to a manufacturing company.

In 1911, North Vernon Lumber Company was located on approximately 1½ blocks in North Vernon. In 1927, they had expanded onto several additional lots with log piles, lumber piles, lumber sheds, a warehouse, offices and a factory. In the 1920s, the cabinet business was a separate division and Orval R. Platter, Edgar's youngest son and Secretary/Treasurer of the company, wrote personal letters to prospective clients. Their cabinets were advertised as "revolutionary equipment", available much cheaper than carpenters could build them on-site. Besides their manufacturing facility in North Vernon, the Platters had saw mills in Louisville, Kentucky and Dyersburg, Tennessee.

In the 1910s, the Platters expanded the company with a division called the PhotoTone, manufacturing equipment for theaters that made sounds of music and voices in unison with the pictures on the screen. From 1919 through 1929, this division was very successful and overshadowed their original woodworking business.

Their sound equipment was sold on contract so if the theater owner didn't make payments, the company repossessed the equipment and reimbursed the finance company. When the Great Depression hit, the Platters were left with a lot of used equipment and little money. The company went bankrupt and was sold at auction in December, 1931. The sale included a 72 acre farm, stable lot behind their Walnut Street homes, automobiles, and fourteen lots with improvements and equipment. The saw mills in Kentucky and Tennessee also closed. The company then reorganized as a stock company by the citizens of North Vernon under the name North Vernon Industries, manufacturing bathroom cabinets, radio cabinets and outdoor furniture. Charles and Orval Platter remained office holders. H.C. Meloy, another resident of this neighborhood served as a director. In 1941, the company was taken over by Noblett Sparks Co., whose name later changed to Arvin Co.

Edgar Platter, patriarch of the North Vernon Platters, retained strong ties to Anderson after he moved his manufacturing facility to North Vernon. However, in 1907, he sold his home in Anderson and constructed an American Foursquare home at 15 Walnut Street, next door to his son Frank. Edgar died here in 1908 at age 71. Emma died in 1911 at age 68. The house was then sold to William Grossman, a North Vernon physician.

Frank Platter, Edgar's oldest son, was born in 1865 and settled in North Vernon in 1893. Frank purchased the property at 23 Walnut Street from John E. McCarnan in 1900 for \$400. The 1903 assessment shows more than \$2,000 in improvements indicating Frank constructed this home shortly after purchasing the lot. Frank was Secretary/Treasurer and later President of the North Vernon Lumber Company. He was active in civic

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 9

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

organizations in North Vernon including the Masons, and Business Men's Club. He led the company until his death in 1926 at age 62.

Charles E. Platter was the second son of Edgar and Emma Platter. Charles Platter moved here from Michigan when the North Vernon Pump and Lumber Company was organized. On April 24, 1900, the property at 19 Walnut Street was transferred from John McCarnan to Orval (Charles's brother) to Charles. He constructed the existing home in 1901 and lived there until 1947. During his tenure with the company, he served in several capacities including lumber buyer, superintendent and Vice President. At his brother's death, Charles became president.

Joseph H. Powell, partner to the Platters, constructed 29 Walnut Street for his family home around 1906. Joseph was Vice-President of the North Vernon Lumber Company before he moved to California around 1915. He died shortly after the family relocated. The family home at 29 Walnut Street was sold to Harry C. Meloy, a local attorney.

Edgar Platter, Frank Platter's oldest son, resided in this neighborhood for approximately six years at 43 Walnut Street. Around 1926, he transferred to the company's lumber mill in Louisville, Kentucky.

In 1900, Powell purchased two lots in this district, and Frank and Charles Platter each purchased one lot. Each gentleman owned these lots individually and not as trustees of the company. Powell built on one of his lots and Frank and Charles each built their homes in 1901. These homes were followed by another by Powell in 1904 before he built his home in 1907 on a lot he purchased in 1906.

The homes constructed by the Powell and the Platters along this street may have been used as advertising or to showcase their construction business. Newspaper advertisements by the company were almost non-existent in the early 1900s. In 1908, the company began frequent, regular advertising in the *North Vernon Plain Dealer*. This coincides with the company name change and focusing their business on building materials and construction. Their ads included a variety of materials for building construction along with various tag lines including "Everything in the Builder's Line", "Reliable House Builders" and "The House Builders." However, no For Sale ads were found for specific houses they built in North Vernon. The company's development along Walnut Street appears to be an organized effort at developing Walnut Street, constructing homes near one another with a couple of speculative homes. This allowed them to display their products and skills. This effort appears to be a small-scale development effort, rather than a "company-owned" housing development. Some of the unimproved lots passed through the company, but the improved house lots were all owned by the individuals in the company, not North Vernon Lumber Company.

At least two of the homes in this neighborhood, 32 and 39, were speculative homes, probably used to demonstrate the lumber company's construction capabilities and/or available building materials. Powell owned

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 10

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

these properties when the homes were constructed and both were sold shortly after their construction. 39 Walnut Street was constructed around 1901 and sold to Frank L. and Anna Conner in 1905. 39 Walnut Street was described in his 1911 obituary as one of the most substantial and modern homes in North Vernon. The lot for 32 Walnut Street transferred from Emily Platter to the North Vernon Pump and Lumber Company to Powell. The home was built c. 1904 and sold to Frank Robinson in 1906. 32 Walnut Street is impressive for its high degree of architectural detail and craftsmanship. With their personal homes included, the North Vernon Lumber Company was the building contractor for at least six of the eleven contributing homes in this district. With their residency in this neighborhood, it is not inconceivable that others constructed in the early 1900s were their work as well.

As owners of the North Vernon Lumber Company, the Platter family and J.H. Powell made significant contributions to the North Vernon community. Over its 40 year history, the company averaged over two hundred employees, not including installers and salesmen working elsewhere. They constructed a number of buildings in North Vernon, including their own residences and many more buildings utilized lumber from their lumber mill as well as a host of other building materials. Their products included flooring and lumber from their own mills as well as window glass, paints, stains, cement, roofing, hardware, etc. Advertisements for flooring in 1908 touted "made direct from the log to you in our own mills." It is not known who designed the homes for either the Platters or Powell.

Finished products from the company's factories were sold throughout the United States. Furniture was sold through Sears, Roebuck and Company, Montgomery Ward etc. Their sound equipment was installed in 1,800 theaters throughout the U.S. In 1925, Platter Universal Cabinets had been installed in homes in several states including Illinois, Florida, Texas, Alabama and Pennsylvania. In 1926, the firm was one of the largest swing factories in Indiana. The North Vernon plant's business totaled over a million dollars a year. The company contributed to the community by employing its citizens, by constructing numerous homes and by supplying lumber and other building materials for a number of local building projects. The company's owners were members of the community who built and lived on Walnut Street.

In addition to the Platters and J.H. Powell, this neighborhood was home to other significant businessmen in North Vernon. Frank Robinson (32 Walnut Street) was associated with his brother-in-law, E.G. McClure in the Iron Clad clothing store in North Vernon for 44 years. Robinson was also Vice-President of the Union Bank & Trust and active in the Masons, Country Club and the Methodist Church. He lived in this home until his death in 1938. His widow, Carrie Robinson continued to reside here until her death around 1950. Their children sold the home in 1954 ending almost fifty years of ownership by the Robinson family.

Other well-known residents in this neighborhood include Lorenzo C. Pennington (105 Walnut Street) a carpenter/cabinet maker, George Moncrief, (105 Walnut Street) an insurance agent, Harry C. Meloy (29 Walnut Street), attorney & director in North Vernon Industries, Frank Overturf (51 Walnut Street), a retired farmer and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 11

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

William Grossman, (15 Walnut Street), a physician. Throughout its growth and development, the residents of this neighborhood made significant contributions to North Vernon. Their residences reflect their wealth, status and the lasting impact they had on this city.

In 1926, US Route 50 was commissioned and its Indiana route ran through downtown North Vernon. It remains one of the more intact highways from that time period. This district includes one feature common to US highways in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, a "tourist camp". This lot was vacant in the 1937 Sanborn maps but by 1943 had a 4-building tourist camp. Three of the four original buildings remain, but later alterations adversely affect their contributing status.

The Walnut Street Historic District is also significant for its architecture. Three of the eleven contributing homes in this district were built before 1900, the remaining eight between 1900 and 1912. The district includes Victorian, Free Classic and Craftsman-style homes, many vernacular in plan with decorative detailing. The homes in this district are strongly reflective of the changing architectural styles from the elaborate, highly ornamented Victorian homes of the 1880s and 1890s to the clean, simple lines of the Craftsman era. Even the late 1800s homes are simple, less ostentatious than other late 1800s homes in North Vernon. While six of the homes were built by the same building contractor, North Vernon Pump and Lumber Company, they are all unique, distinctly different in their decorative treatments. This uniqueness can be attributed to the fact that they were privately built and were possibly used to showcase the contractor's wide variety of materials and abilities.

The Frank Robinson home at 32 Walnut Street is the most architecturally elaborate home in the district. This ornate Victorian home has numerous architectural details. The front ell is highly ornamented with leaded glass windows and wood trim from the 2nd floor gable to the basement. The decorative siding, ornate trim, leaded and stained glass windows, arches and ridge cresting are all common elements found on Victorian homes, but the simpler plan, without a large porch and corner tower transition this home to the Late Victorian style.

The district includes other late Victorian homes which exhibit Victorian style detailing, but are less ostentatious than many Victorian homes. These home have decorative gables and window and door trim and leaded and stained glass windows. 23 and 29 Walnut Street both fall in this category. Their plans are simpler without the large porches and corner towers from the Queen Anne style, but they retain Victorian details in the gable, windows and trim. 35 Walnut Street has decorative window trim unlike any other in the district with fluted sides, sawtooth headers and corner medallions. While this homes dates to the late 1800s, it falls in the vernacular category with simpler decorative elements and plan.

Because of the influx of development from 1900-1912, this district also includes strong references to the Craftsman style. 15 Walnut Street is a typical American Foursquare with its hipped roof and boxy shape, but with round porch columns and large picture windows, less typical for foursquares. 43 and 105 Walnut Street

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 12

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

also include Craftsman architectural elements including hipped roofs, wide eaves, clean, straight lines on door and window trim, rusticated concrete block, and large, square porch supports.

Two homes in the district exhibit more unique architecture. The porch railing on 51 Walnut Street has a unique profile, curving out from plane of the railing. It is the only one in this district, but it is found on houses elsewhere in North Vernon. The Charles Platter House at 19 Walnut Street is distinctive for its combination of a bay window, half-turret and pointed arch all found on the front façade.

As a district, as a group of late 1800s and early 1900s houses, these homes possess a wide variety of architectural details including window trim, stained glass windows, decorative siding, gable trim, roof cresting brackets, and brickwork. Individually, the homes are not high-style, however, they retain numerous architectural elements from the Victorian and Craftsman styles. They represent an active period of growth and development and are well-representative of men who helped shape and build North Vernon. This district developed as a residential area in North Vernon and the extant homes remain single-family residential.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9 Page 13

 Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
 Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

BIBLIOGRAPHY

An Atlas of Jennings County, Indiana. Philadelphia, PA: D.J. Lake & Co., 1884.

History of Jennings County, Indiana. Evansville, IN: Unigraphic, Inc. 1979.

Jennings County Deed Books – through 1955

Jennings County Partnership Records

Jennings County Transfer Books 1868-1975

Jennings County Public Library – Boxed files on the Platter family, North Vernon history, obituary files, cemetery records

North Vernon Plain Dealer – various issues from 1900-1950

North Vernon Sun Times – various issues from 1900-1950

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps – 1886, 1899, 1914, 1940

United States Federal Census – 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 14

 Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
 Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

Boundary Description

The Walnut Street Historic District begins at the northeast corner of the property at 32 Walnut Street and runs west, parallel to Walnut Street, along the north lot lines of 32-52 Walnut Street, across Gum Street along the north lot line of 106 Walnut, to the NW corner of the property at 106 Walnut Street. Turn south and run along the west side of this property, across Walnut Street, along the west side of the property at 105 Walnut Street to the southwest corner of this property. Turn east and run along the south edge of this property parallel to Walnut Street, across Gum Street and along the south property lines for 51 and 43 Walnut Street. Continue east running parallel to Walnut Street and along the south edge of the properties on the south side of Walnut Street to the southeast corner of 15 Walnut Street. Turn north and run with the east property line of 15 Walnut Street, to the south side of Walnut Street. Turn west, to the northeast corner of 29 Walnut Street. Cross Walnut and follow the east property line of 32 Walnut to the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries encompass the extant contributing structures in this upper class neighborhood of North Vernon. This block was significant for its association with the North Vernon Pump and Lumber Company and encompasses the homes which are connected to the company and its owners. The boundaries include some non-contributing infill structures on the north side, but the contributing structures have a strong significance to the history of North Vernon.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photo Log Page 15

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
February, 2006
South side Streetscape, from 35, camera looking Southeast
Photo #1

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
39 and 43 Walnut Street, camera looking Southwest
Photo #2

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
February, 2006
South side Streetscape from 43, camera looking southwest
Photo #3

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
February, 2006
Non-contributing infill structures on the north side, camera looking northwest
Photo #4

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
15 Walnut Street, camera looking southeast
Photo #5

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photo Log Page 16

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
19 Walnut Street, camera looking south
Photo #6

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
105 Walnut Street, camera looking south
Photo #7

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
32 Walnut Street, camera looking north
Photo #8

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
Gable detail on 23 Walnut Street, camera looking south
Photo #9

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
Decorative details in gable, porch columns and porch gable on 29 Walnut Street, camera looking southeast
Photo #10

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photo Log Page 17

Walnut Street Historic District
Name of property
Jennings County, Indiana
county and State

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
February, 2006
Window group on west side of 29 Walnut Street, camera looking east
Photo #11

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
February, 2006
Decorative window trim on 35 Walnut Street, camera looking south
Photo #12

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
Porch railing on 51 Walnut Street, camera looking southeast
Photo #13

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
Outbuilding at 29 Walnut Street, camera looking northeast
Photo #14

Walnut Street Historic District
Jennings County, Indiana
Carol Ann Schweikert
October, 2005
Outbuilding at 23 Walnut Street, camera looking northwest
Photo #15



Photo 1



Photo 4



Photo 6



Photo 8



Photo 13